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## The Traitor and his Plea Examined and Characterized.

Having received an anonymous request to preach from 2d Samuel 18, 26, and believing it might be a Presidential interference to afford a fitting occasion to illustrate the whole rebellion which is now convulsing the land, I accepted the challenge and preached the following sermon. And now, by the earnest desire of several of my congregation, I submit it for publication, hoping it may subvert the cause of truth and the interests of my imperilled country.

A. M. SWAIN.  
Manchester, Vt., Aug. 7, 1862.

"Then Abner called to Joab and said, Shall the sword devour forever? knowest thou not it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?"—2 Samuel 18, 20.

This was the language of a base and unscrupulous traitor,—a feigned and hypocritical plea to arrest the progress of a pursuing army, secure the safe retreat of his defeated forces, and save his own justly forfeited life. And any man who now adopts this language as his own, and flings back the traitor's plea in the face of his imperilled country, is secession at heart, sympathizes with treason, opposes a vigorous prosecution of the war, and throws a shield of protection over his country's enemies. In elucidating this subject, I design to trace the analogy between the condition of these Jewish belligerents and that of my own countrymen in our present struggle, for the instruction of those who hate treason, and who are concerned for the honor and welfare of the nation.

1st. The first parallel I notice is, that our conflict, as well as theirs, is waged between brethren. War is everywhere, and always a terrible scourge, and can be regarded by thinking men only as an unspeakable calamity. We deprecate a collision between foreign powers as an unmitigated curse, however just or unavoidable it may seem to be. Wherever the tramp of war is heard, there agriculture is interrupted; commerce is broken up; harvests are consumed; cities are laid waste; public fortresses are destroyed; homes are made desolate; and sorrow and mourning fill the hearts of all. But all these evils are increased and intensified by a civil war. When a nation is internally convulsed, and brother meets brother in deadly strife, then war assumes its most deplorable aspects. How base and unnatural for those who inherit the same blood and enjoy a common inheritance, to butcher one another, fire their own habitations, and desolate their own homes. It is true of civil war especially, though a traitor said it, that "it is bitterness in the latter end." Combatants, grieved on by a blind passion, or a mad ambition, may hurl death and destruction around them, but let calmer thoughts succeed, and every generous minded man must weep tears of bitterness as he surveys the carnage and misery he has created. It is enough to melt a heart of stone only to gaze upon the sad memorials of the battle field. It was right that these Jewish contestants should remember their fraternal relations and calculate the results of their infernal work. But was Abner the man to complain that the sword devoured, and to taunt Joab with pursuing his brethren? Why had he gathered an army, and commenced this work of death? He called it play in the morning to set the boys to butchering each other, but since he was worsted in the fight, and was likely to fall a prey to his pursuers, he hypocritically complains that the sword devours, and whiningly pleads for a respite from his flying captives. The consummate villain! What did he care how many brethren were slaughtered, or how much blood was shed, had he but been the victor? Joab justly retorts and flings back the blame upon his own head, as the guilty fratricide; for, unless he had commenced the affair, no blood would have been shed. But so it often is. The first to make mischief are the first to complain when the evil begins to fall upon their own heads. Those who inaugurated the terrible rebellion that is now convulsing this nation, whiningly ask "to be left alone," but only as Abner did, to gain time, to recover strength, and strike a more deadly blow. And so, those who reiterate Abner's appeal to discourage energy in the war, are those who oppose the Government, foster the enemies of their country, and gloat over her disasters. It is but another

attempt of rebel sympathizers to save traitors to arms against their country from the doom they so richly merit.

2d. But another striking parallel is, that our foes, as well as theirs, are rebels and traitors to the government. David had been chosen and anointed by Samuel, by the people, to be king of Israel, in the place of Saul, whom God had rejected. There were bickering and divisions among the people, so that on the death of Saul, only the tribe of Judah actually acknowledged the Divine appointment. Abner, who was an ambitious man, and commander-in-chief of Saul's forces, and influential withal, conceived the idea of setting up a rival kingdom. For this purpose he anointed Ishbosheth, Saul's son, a weak and inefficient man, and proclaimed him king in the place of his father, calculating no doubt, that he as military dictator, would be virtual ruler of the rival kingdom. And he would thus reach the height of his ambition by deceit, treachery and usurpation. He thus prostituted his influence and power to seduce eleven tribes from their allegiance to David, and build up a rival interest to supplant the lawfully and Divinely constituted government of the nation. And for the two years that Ishbosheth held peaceful possession of his ill gotten throne, Abner, as is generally conceded, was collecting and training an army to sustain his unrighteous dominion and overthrow the national government. And it was in the act of consummating this treasonable design that he experienced a signal defeat. Joab, David's nephew, was commander-in-chief of the loyal forces. And no truer man or more valiant and successful general ever led an army. No rebel blood flowed in his veins, and for forty years he played the man for his king and his country, and never lost a battle, nor trailed his flag in the face of traitors. Such was the character of this Jewish conflict, and it is easy to trace its resemblance to the present struggle. We are contending, as was Joab, with rebels,—enemies to the government under which they live, and who have barely plotted his ruin while enjoying its confidence and protection, and sharing largely in its emoluments and honors. Judas-like, they have betrayed the confidence of their friends and stabbed the very bosom upon which they were nurtured. The blow has been struck deliberately, by traitor hands, and aimed at the very heart of the nation and the integrity of this Republic. And no reason can be assigned for so dastardly an act, but a mad ambition, "which rather reigns in hell than serve in heaven." This rebellion is not one of those just and unavoidable revolutions that sometimes occurs to correct intolerable abuses, but it is a wicked and unjustifiable conspiracy of rebel leaders to overthrow the best of human governments. And it has well been asked, "What has this government done to provoke such an unhalloved rebellion?" The South have always had their share, and more too, of the public offices;—they have had new slave territory given them from the domain of freedom; fugitive slave laws have been enacted for their special benefit, and compromises, safeguards and Dred Scott decisions have been piled up on our statute books, until all rational freedom had been well nigh voted out of the nation. "Not one right of the South had this government trampled on; not one immunity had been withheld; not one privilege denied; not one liberty infringed; not one solitary interest threatened. Utterly and forever groundless is this great crime of assailing the best and most beneficent government on the face of the earth. And this nation may stand up before a witnessing world, and before the tribunal of impartial history, and say to this spirit of rebellion, 'The wrong be upon thine own head; the blood shed in this unholy war will all be found at last in thine own skirts.' This government is only engaged in the lawful work of suppressing violence and wrong, putting down armed rebellion, and restoring peace and order in her own domain; and it is not for rebels in arms to demand with insolence, 'Shall the sword devour forever,' and taunt the government they would subvert with pursuing vindictively her own brethren. Let them show themselves brethren instead of enemies, before they claim such a half-witted relation; and let them practically disavow the crime of treason and return to their allegiance, ere they claim protection

of the government, they are attempting to destroy.

3d. But it is another important parallel, that this war, as well as its Jewish prototype, has been wickedly forced upon us, and is only accepted as a last and terrible alternative. David sought no quarrel with Ishbosheth, though he had accepted a rival crown, and united a rebel confederacy in his own Divinely chartered domain. But like our own President, he left the usurper alone, hoping that by peaceful measures, better counsels would prevail, and that under his wise and equitable administration all opposition would cease, and final amity prevail. And Joab sought no conflict with Abner, though he was seducing loyal men from their allegiance, training an army for the field, instituting war measures on a large scale, and evidently with the most hostile and treasonable designs. And when the crisis at length came, and an army was at length marched toward Hebron, then Joab only marshalled his trusty followers to meet and repel, and by no means to attack, as tauntingly he, "He met their advancing columns, and only the point of Gilboa divided them, ready to fight or to disperse, just as the temper of the enemy inclined. And after the bloody conflict had transpired, he thus answers the murmuring traitor: 'The responsibility is yours; for we would all have returned home in peace, but for your own challenge to the combat.' Abner came there with hostile intentions, well prepared for the fray, and so confident of an easy victory that he called it only play to set the boys at each other, calculating, no doubt, to find a pretext for a general encounter, in which to vanquish the loyal army. But he found to his cost, though he was an experienced commander, and Joab but a boy, that what was commenced in the morning as play, had come to be a serious game at night. He had coped with an antagonist whose valor and ability he had underestimated. David, too, was a man of peace, and had borne insults with patience, aggressions with forbearance, and persecutions without retaliation, and had suffered indignity and wrong in silence, rather than provoke an open war; and he was doubtless regarded as a sort of 'Yankee mudsill,' who had not spirit enough to resist an injury, and who would yield to any encroachments, however arbitrary and unjust, rather than violently assert his own rights. And in their pride and insolence, they vainly reckoned that each one of their 'chivalric hosts' was equal to five or more of those tame submissionists, should they dare to question their traitorous demands. But Joab had ventured to confront them as an equal; and there he stood in all the might and dignity of conscious rectitude and innocence, peaceable as a lamb, yet brave as a lion; uttering no faltering proclamations, but ready to meet the first man with merited vengeance who dared to unsheath the sword across his pathway. And such has been our position as a nation. We have taken up arms in self defence, and only as a last resort. And it has been well asked, 'Was there ever before, in all human annals, the record of a government so forbearing, so calmly patient, so silently enduring, and so unflinching and manifold wrongs, hoping against hope, that right reason would ere long resume its sway, and the hour of madness disappear; forbearing until forbearance had well nigh destroyed the confidence of its friends, stifled the enthusiasm of its supporters, and provoked our enemies to question whether or not we had any government left?' It was not until public treasuries were plundered, until forts and arsenals, and mints, and national vessels were seized, until munitions of war were traitorously appropriated, until rebels in Congress had boldly announced their treason, and hurled defiance at the government, and not until batteries were opened upon a national fortress and its commissioned defenders under protection of the national flag; not till all this, did our government arise in its majesty and say to this spirit of rebellion, 'Thus far and no farther.' When Sumner fell, then we bid its aggressive cease. But how tamely have we prosecuted the war! how tenderly have we dealt with treason! how careful to protect rebel property! how fearful of wounding the feelings, or of injuring the persons of traitors in arms! and how earnest to promote conciliation and institute measures of

peace! And on the other hand, how deadly is the rebel hate! how implacable their vengeance! and how determined in their traitorous designs! And now with all this provocation on the one hand, and patient endurance on the other, how ill timed and insulting is he taunted by traitors at home, with waging a vindictive war against the South, and of ruthlessly murdering our own brethren! And how contemptible and treasonable the advice, urging the loyal to lay down their arms, while traitors, all undaunted, maintain their hostile attitude, pursue their work of pillage and desolation, imprisoning and hanging men, guilty of no crime but of loyalty to their country, and casting their black pall over all the families of the land. And any man who at such an hour will take the traitor's place and fling back Abner's hypocritical plea, in the face of the loyal, may well disguise his hand and conceal his name, to hide the credentials of his treachery and shame. Let his name be forgotten and perished!

4th. We discover also this parallel between them. These wars were prosecuted with false assumptions and mendacious desperation on the one hand, and with true patriotism and civilized amenities on the other. Both wars were initiated by traitors under a false guise, and were carried on by treachery and deceit. God had made David king, but Abner had made Ishbosheth king; but on what assumption it is not distinctly stated; but probably on the plea of his being heir to the crown by lineal descent, according to the custom of surrounding nations; but whatever it was, it weighed nothing against the authority of Heaven. David came rightly to the throne, as Abraham Lincoln did to the Presidential chair, and any rival claim was a false assumption, a weak and unworthy plea for a base and unjustifiable act. Every traitor begins his career by perjury and treason, and then sticks at nothing, however vile and unprincipled, to compass his unholy ends. What more despicable meanness could a man perpetrate, than that of stirring up strife among brethren, inciting a spirit of wicked rebellion, and of seducing the loyal from their allegiance to their rightful king, and then raising an army to defend such monstrous claims, and maintain such a base and infernal rebellion. A war thus commenced would be likely to be prosecuted with unscrupulous perfidy, and without any regard to the rules of civilized warfare. What is begun in baseness, may be expected to progress in unrighteousness and to end in infamy. Treachery and deception will mark the whole course of an ancient or a modern traitor. False pretences will be set up, base and hypocritical pleas will be made, vile stratagems will be resorted to, and unheard of atrocities committed. Abner could basely assassinate the intrepid Asahel, and then, with his hands reeking in innocent blood, set up the perfidious plea of grief and anguish over slaughtered brethren, to save his own justly forfeited life. We need nothing but his own language to stamp the whole transaction as an inhuman and unparalleled atrocity. It seems plain enough that the victor had a lawful right to the armor of the vanquished, as a trophy of military valor. And Asahel, as a valiant and ambitious general, was bent upon stripping Abner of his traitorously assumed laurels; and Abner is determined not to be thus despoiled and dishonored; hence he forewarns Asahel to let him alone, and select some meaner subject for his ambition. But Asahel, as yet, looks for no treachery even in the heart of a rebel, and is prepared for no dishonorable warfare. He does not believe that a valiant soldier will commit so dastardly an act as murder, to save himself from the disgrace of losing his armor. But he miscalculated once; treason prepares a man for the lowest depths of debasement and infamy. Abner's own confession fixes an everlasting stigma upon his name. He virtually says, you may pursue any other soldier and seize his armor with impunity, but I am a traitor, and am bound by no laws of honor, and will certainly take your life if you persist; but spare me this humiliation, for how can I meet your brother Joab and look into his manly face after such an atrocious act? His very language shows that he is violating all the rules of honorable warfare, and exposing himself to a just and terrible retribution, yet he thrusts his ear backward, and Asahel, his waiting

in his own blood. Such is perfidy and treason wherever you find it, as we have abundant occasion to know.—Our enemies flaunt false pretences for the war, fight with stolen weapons, and under masked batteries. They hang up false colors to deceive; they take the oath of allegiance by day, and then act as spies and assassins at night; they poison food and wells of water; conceal deadly missiles in deserted camps; carry on a murderous guerrilla warfare, perpetrating unheard of atrocities on the wounded and dead and dying, leaving desolation and woe all along their fighting track. This is one side of the dreadful picture. And we know the history of the other. There was no braver or more generous foe in ancient time than the incorruptible Joab,—that peerless warrior in the army of David. Some have denounced him as cruel, inhuman and treacherous; but when we take into account the warlike time in which he lived, the military education he received, the treachery and duplicity with which he had to contend, his loyalty to the throne and government of David, and his responsibility, as chief commander in the army, for the punishment of treason and other national crimes, we cannot but regard him as a man of unparalleled virtue, and as a model military commander. He knew no such thing as fear, as perturbation or rashness. He never gave a challenge, nor refused one when given. He never asked for quarter, nor denied it when asked. He fought as a true soldier, trusting in God and in his appointed warfare. He practised no inhumanities to render his warfare more formidable and effective. And so it has been in our present struggle. Our armies are actuated by a high and noble spirit. They are fighting not for passion nor revenge, but to maintain the great principles that underlie all human governments, and which are indispensably requisite for their existence and safety. In prosecuting their work, though it be a work of death, they harbor no hostile spirit toward the South, and will commit no ravages and interfere with no rights but such as a military necessity both justifies and demands. They go forth as friends and protectors, to re-establish peace and order, to restore to the loyal their plundered rights, and to plant again the national flag on every fort and tower from which traitor hands have torn it. Their mission is one of mercy; but when necessary, judgment will be meted out to the wicked with scrupulous exactness. There has never been an army called into the field embracing a larger amount of social position, of high moral culture, of true elevation of character, and possessing more noble soldierly qualities than ours. And while by their moral bearing our soldiers have won imperishable honor, they have also achieved some of the most brilliant victories, both by land and by sea, that have ever been recorded. Whatever may be our conflicting views as to the wisdom of our rulers, and the general conduct of the war, there can be but one opinion as to the bravery and fidelity of the patriot martyrs who have met the enemy under most disadvantageous circumstances, and who under a murderous and galling fire of grape and canister, have never once blanched at the fate that awaited them. We have an army of the true Joab stamp, who fear nothing but God and their country's dishonor. They may be overpowered and killed, but can never be conquered; heroes worthy of their ancestral renown, whose names should be chronicled in history, engraven on marble tablets, and immortalized in song.

5th. We find also this striking parallel, that a more distinguished consideration has been shown to enemies; and a more ready forgiveness has been tendered to rebels than the laws of humanity or of national safety have warranted. Treason is universally regarded as the highest crime known in human jurisprudence. Leading traitors have everywhere been branded with infamy, and punished by confiscation and death. Abner and his co-conspirators might have been rigidly held to the severest penalty known to human laws; and yet how mild and lenient were their noble conquerors! Abner's whole life was red with crime and treason. He had been a willing tool of Saul in his persecutions of David; he was unchaste and licentious in his life, was the chief conspirator in this unholy rebellion, had superadded

a flagrant murder to the crime of treason, and was guilty of the basest hypocrisy to save his worthless life; but Joab, as a brave and magnanimous leader, listened to the culprit's plea for mercy, sounded a trumpet to stay his army from pursuit, and suffered the retreating foe to retire with all the honors of war to their own homes. Not another blow was struck, not a single prisoner was detained, not a hostage even was kept, and not a single life was demanded as a forfeit for their crimes. It is probable that Joab was ignorant, as yet, of the death of Asahel, or nothing would have saved the guilty assassin from instant death. Had the rebels been truly penitent and desirous of an honorable peace, it were well, perhaps, that they were so freely forgiven, and left to think over their crimes at leisure, and return to their allegiance without added severity or seeming compulsion. And it is easy to see that if Joab erred, it was on the side of mercy. He showed a kind and forbearing spirit toward an humbled and retreating foe, and a willingness to show mercy quite as soon as it was deserved. But time proved that he was altogether too lenient and forgiving. There was no real penitence, no loyalty in their hearts, and they only abused their benefactor by recruiting their forces, and returning with new vigor to their treasonable work. And in this way David himself often erred, as when he made a great feast and called the traitor Abner to share in its festivities; and then, the pompous mourning he made at his death; a mark of consideration that was never shown to the most brave and loyal of his own generals. When Asahel fell by the hand of the traitor, fighting valiantly for his king and his country, David passed it over in the most profound silence. But when a man who made himself vile, fell as did Abner, by the hand of the avenger of blood, as God had appointed, then he is mourned and bewailed as though "a great man had fallen in Israel," and the most terrible curses were invoked upon the head of his executioner. Thus treason was treated tenderly, and the traitor himself, was abundantly honored.

And who cannot see the same mistake repeated over and over again, in our own army. Whenever there is but a seeming cessation of hostilities, or a mock oath of allegiance taken, the most desperate of rebels have been released, and not an example has been made of the most radical traitors, and secessionists, taken in arms against the peace and liberties of their country.—Multitudes have been set free to abuse their benefactors; stir up sedition; raise new armies; make more hostile demonstrations, and commit more terrible atrocities than they had been guilty of before. In some instances, more profound respect has been proffered to rebellion, union sentiment has been discharged, and the hearts of the loyal have been made sad. By a false and overstrained sympathy with rebels, treason has become rampant and the vilest of wretches have been shielded from the penalties of their own misdoing.

6th. And finally as a most striking parallel, we have learned that false sympathy for crime has encouraged and strengthened rebellion, and prolonged and intensified the war. Had Joab but followed up his advantage, in that first conflict, and only held the leading traitor to a strict and uncompromising account for his sins, the whole rebellion would have been crushed at a single blow. The removal of but one vile and unprincipled man, the moving spirit, in this foul insurrection, would have ended the war, and saved the nation a vast amount of treasure and life. Just so long as the cause of this unhallowed rebellion was left unharmed, and at liberty, there could be no termination to the strife. Hence they suffered a long war, with all its attendant horrors, which might have been ended at first, with but one just and summary punishment. Peace was out of the question, so long as this traitor was suffered to live. "For seven full years Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul," and yet he afterward acknowledged that he was fighting against the revealed and known will of Jehovah. There is perhaps, not another such instance on record, of bold and unscrupulous treason to man, and of daring, defiant opposition to the authority of heaven.—But the day of vengeance finally came; and it was a happy day to Israel, when the guilty rebel received his appropriate

(CONTINUED ON 4TH PAGE.)